

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 141208Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3393

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI 0696

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: SANJAY GANDHI: HEIR APPARENT

REF: NEW DELHI 308

SUMMARY: SANJAY GANDHI ABANDONED BACK CORRIDOR POLITICS  
TO STEP INTO THE PUBLIC LIMELIGHT AT THE DEC 28-JAN 1  
AICC SESSION AT CHANDIGARH. HE SPOKE FREQUENTLY.  
SENIOR GOI AND CONGRESS LEADERS SOUGHT HIM OUT TO CONVERSE  
OR TO BE PUBLICLY SEEN WITH HIM. SANJAY EVEN FLEW OVER  
RURAL VILLAGES IN THE AREA IN A LARGE HOT-AIR BALLOON,  
SHOWERING DOWN PICTURES OF HIS MOTHER AND LEAFLETS ON THE  
TWENTY POINT ECONOMIC PROGRAM. SANJAY'S PROJECTION AT  
CHANDIGARH; HIS STEADY ACCUMULATION OF INFLUENCE WITHIN  
THE GOI AND THE CONGRESS DESCRIBED IN A RECENT AIRGRAM;  
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AND THE DECEMBER PLACEMENT OF SOME OF HIS KEY SUPPORTERS

IN THE CABINET LEAVE LITTLE IF ANY DOUBT THAT, WITH MATERNAL SUPPORT, IS IS ATTEMPTING TO POSITION HIMSELF FOR INDIA'S TOP JOB. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRIME MINISTER'S 30-YEAR-OLD SON, SANJAY GANDHI, ABANDONED BACK CORRIDOR POLITICS TO STEP INTO THE POLITICAL LIMELIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE DEC 28-JAN 1 AICC SESSION IN CHANDIGARH. SANJAY AND THE PRIME MINISTER WERE THE PRIME ATTRACTIONS AT THE SESSION REPORTED REFTEL. SANJAY SAT ON A PLATFORM BEHIND THE SPEAKERS' DIAS ALONG WITH MINISTERS AND SENIOR CONGRESS PARTY OFFICIALS. HIGH LEVEL GOI AND CONGRESS PERSONALITIES ENGAGED HIM IN STANDING CONVERSATIONS ON THE STAGE IN WELL-ORCHESTRATED, FULL VIEW OF THE FOUR THOUSAND STRONG AUDIENCE, SOME 15 FEET TO THE SIDE OF THE SPEAKERS' PODIUM. HIS ATTRACTIVE EX-MODEL WIFE, MANEKA, OCCASIONALLY SPICED UP HIS PERSONAL CONVERSATION GROUP. CHIEF MINISTERS, POLITICIANS AND OTHERS CROWDED AROUND SANJAY. SOME BECKONED PHOTOGRAPHERS OVER TO TAKE THEIR PICTURE WITH HIM. SANJAY'S SECURITY WAS ALMOST AS TIGHT AS THE PRIME MINISTER'S. THE COFFEE SHOP IN THE LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM WAS CLOSED OFF WHENEVER HE ENTERED. CONGRESSMEN CHANTED "LONG LIVE INDIRA GANDHI, LONG LIVE SANJAY GANDHI" ON THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING THE HALL. CROWDS GAVE HIM ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTIONS WHEREVER HE WENT. IN A PROMOTION GIMMICK, SANJAY FLEW OVER NEIGHBORING VILLAGES IN A COLORFUL HOT-AIR BALLOON, WAVING TO CHEERING PEOPLE AND SHOWERING DOWN HANDBILLS CONTAINING HIS MOTHER'S PICTURE AND HER TWENTY POINT PROGRAM. (AT THE END OF THE SESSION, THE INDIA HOT-AIR BALLOON SOCIETY ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD AGREED TO BECOME ITS PATRON.)

2. SANJAY'S POLITICAL DEBUT AT CHANDIGARH WENT BEYOND ATMOSPHERICS. HE ADDRESSED SEPARATE MEETINGS OF PARTY SUB-COMMITTEES AND THE CONGRESS PARTY'S NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION OF INDIA (NSUI). HUNDREDS OF MPS AND OTHER CONGRESS-MEN CLEARED OUT OF THE AICC CONFERENCE HALL TO LISTEN TO HIS KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO A YOUTH CONGRESS MEETING HELD AT A SEPARATE SITE IN CHANDIGARH. AT A RALLY, HE DRAMATICALLY ADMINISTERED A PLEDGE TO CONGRESS YOUTH TO PURGE INDIAN SOCIETY OF ALL CONFIDENTIAL

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SOCIAL EVILS AND TO IMPLEMENT THE TWENTY POINT ECONOMIC PROGRAM.

3. FOLLOWING THE SESSION'S TERMINATION, SANJAY IMMEDIATELY SET OUT ON A MULTI-STATE TOUR WITH THE ANNOUNCED GOAL TO ESTABLISH AND INVIGORATE THE YOUTH CONGRESS ORGANIZATION AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS AROUND THE COUNTRY. HE HAS SO FAR VISITED AND ADDRESSED RALLIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH AND

BOMBAY. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE HE WILL ALSO MAKE STOPS IN MADHYA PRADESH, KARNATAKA, KERALA, WEST BENGAL AND ASSAM, AND THAT Y WILL PROBABLY BE ON THE ROAD FOR A GOOD PORTION OF THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. IT A VISAKHAPATNAM RALLY, AN ENORMOUS PICTURE OF A PENSIVE SANJAY STANDING NEXT TO THE CHIEF MINISTER HOVERED BEHIND THE SPEAKERS' PLATFORM. UNION MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS RAGHU RAMIAH HERALDED HIM AS THE "RISING SUN IN INDIAN POLITICS." HIS TRAVELLING ENTOURAGE IN BOMBAY INCLUDED DEFENSE MINISTER BANSI LAL AND INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER V.C. SHUKLA. IN BOMBAY, SANJAY SPOKE TO A JOINT YOUTH CONGRESS-LABOR RALLY AND HELD SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS WITH LOCAL INTELLECTUALS AND NEWSPAPER EDITORS. YOUNG ANURA BANDARANAIKE, SON OF THE SRI LANKA PRIME MINISTER, SAT NEXT TO SANJAY AT THE LABOR RALLY. BANDARANAIKE ALSO ADDRESSED THE CROWD, STATING THAT HE AND SANJAY WERE ENTERING POLITICS AT THE SAME TIME. HE PROCLAIMED "WE WISH EACH OTHER TREMENDOUS LUCK."

4. SANJAY'S SPEECHES AT CHANDIGARH AND DURING HIS PRESENT TOUR WERE GENERALLY FREE FROM THE RADICAL CLICHES AND GLIB REFERENCES TYPICAL OF MANY CONGRESS POLITICIANS, ALTHOUGH HE HAS OCCASIONALLY PIKED UP THE "EXTERNAL DANGERS" THEME AND CRITICIZED THE WESTERN PRESS WHEN DEFENDING THE EMERGENCY. HIS REMARKS HAVE BEEN MAINLY TOWARD YOUTH, URGING THEM TO ESCHEW POLITICS "WHETHER OF RIGHT, LEFT OR CENTER," TO DIRECT THEIR ENERGIES TOWARD UPLIFTING THE POOR AND INCREASING PRODUCTION, TO CHAMPION FAMILY PLANNING AND TO WORK ENERGETICALLY TO ELIMINATE "SOCIAL EVILS" SUCH AS THE DOWRY SYSTEM. HE OFTEN ENDED HIS SPEECHES BY EXHORTING HIS AUDIENCE TO PRACTICE THE EMERGENCY-RELATED SLOGAN OF "LESS TALK AND MORE WORK."

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5. COMMENT: SANJAY'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS HAS BEEN TO PROJECT HIMSELF INTO THE PUBLIC LIMELIGHT. A RECENT YOUTH CONGRESS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT A YOUTH CONGRESS ORGANIZATIONAL PRESENCE WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN ALL STATES DOWN TO THE BLOCK LEVEL COUPLED WITH HIS PRESENT TOUR INDICATE THAT HE INTENDS TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT IN STRENGTHENING AND INCREASING THE INFLUENCE OF THE YOUTH CONGRESS ORGANIZATION IN INDIA. HIS STEADILY RISING INFLUENCE IN THE GOI AND THE CONGRESS (NEW DELHI A-398), THE RECENT INDUCTION OF SEVERAL OF HIS KEY SUPPORTERS IN THE CABINET, AND HIS UNMISTAKABLE "PUBLIC DEBUT" OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS LEAVE LITTLE ROOM TO DOUBT THAT, UNDER THE BENEVOLENT EYE OF HIS MOTHER, HE IS ATTEMPTING TO POSITION HIMSELF AS MRS. GANDHI'S EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR.

6. COMMENTS AND VIEWS OF CONGEN BOMBAY ON SANJAY ARE

INCLUDED IN THIS MESSAGE.

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## Message Attributes

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